

Management Response

To the Independent Review of Performance
2021-25

Response to findings

Dairy Australia welcomes the 2021-25 independent performance review and accepts its findings in full. We have prepared this document to outline our response to the recommendations in the review.

As an industry-owned, levy-funded organisation operating within a statutory framework, we believe transparency, accountability and responsiveness are fundamental. The review provides an important and public assessment of our performance and validates the direction of change already underway, while offering a clear roadmap for strengthening our impact in the years ahead.

The findings of the review come at a pivotal time for Dairy Australia. Since November 2024, the organisation has appointed a new Chair and Chief Executive Officer and refreshed the executive leadership team. Dairy Australia has a clear mandate to sharpen focus, increase consistency and deliver real and tangible value for farmers, industry and government.

Where we're doing well

The review confirms Dairy Australia has delivered strong performance in several critical areas. These include robust governance and compliance arrangements, effective alignment with government requirements, strong trade and market access capability and sector-leading work on sustainability through the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework. These outcomes demonstrate the value of sustained collaboration across industry and government and provide a solid platform for the future.

Where we can improve

The review is clear that our performance has been mixed across the full breadth of our responsibilities. In particular, it highlights the need for greater clarity on Dairy Australia's role and remit, more consistent engagement with levy payers across regions and improved visibility of how investments translate into practical, on-farm outcomes. We acknowledge these findings and understand the expectations of levy payers for clarity, relevance and impact.

Commitment to act on recommendations and report on progress

The review's findings reinforce the feedback we heard through our extensive consultation with farmers and industry stakeholders when developing our Strategic Plan 2030.

In line with the feedback we received through our own consultation process and the recommendations of the report, Dairy Australia has already begun taking action and will report transparently on progress. This includes clear accountability for actions, measurable milestones and ongoing engagement with levy payers, industry bodies and government. More detail on the actions we will take can be found in the tables on the following pages.

Progress will be monitored, measured and communicated on a regular basis to demonstrate how the organisation is responding and where further focus is required. A consolidated update on activities and overall progress will be prepared every six months and shared with stakeholders. This information will also be incorporated into Dairy Australia's annual Performance Report to provide a clear view of outcomes achieved over time.

Dairy Australia response to recommendations

These tables present the recommended actions and associated priority levels identified in the Independent Review of Performance (IROP) 2020–25, together with Dairy Australia’s response.

Focus area: Strategic performance

IROP Recommendation	IROP Priority	Dairy Australia response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify Dairy Australia’s role and remit to stakeholders, ensuring transparency on responsibilities and boundaries across research, extension and policy support. Reassess scope of activities to avoid duplication and maintain focus on core priorities. 	Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the new Strategic Plan 2030 to strengthen communications and clearly articulate the vision, purpose and scope of Dairy Australia. Ensure activities and annual investments align to the core priorities, goals and scorecard outlined in the new Strategic Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve visibility of trade and policy outcomes for levy payers through targeted communication using levy payer-specific channels or forums for tailored updates. 	For consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure communications on trade and policy outcomes are embedded within the broader farmer communications strategy.

Focus area: Engagement, consultation and communication

IROP Recommendation	IROP Priority	Dairy Australia response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen engagement and communication by focusing on quality over quantity with clear, accessible, results-oriented messaging that shows achievements and ongoing work. Improve clarity of Dairy Australia’s role in regional engagement under the RDP Evolution model. 	Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review communications activities to improve the effectiveness of content and channels. Strengthen the role of communications and engagement to ensure consistent, relevant and clear communications is accessible across regions and functions. Strengthen the collaboration with RDPs, their Council of Chairs and industry to identify overlap with Dairy Australia’s regional resources and continue to support the RDP Executive Officers to identify and resolve operational and regional issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve accessibility and usability of information resources (navigation, simpler language, concise summaries highlighting outcomes and levy value). Enhance transparency in consultation processes by communicating how stakeholder feedback informs decisions and plans. 	For consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuously optimise the digital experience for farmers to access resources on their preferred channels, including leveraging AI search capabilities. Make stakeholder input and feedback loops central to all consultation through a refreshed Stakeholder Consultation Framework. As an example, the industry’s Water Reference Group formed around the issue of water recovery under the Murray Darling Basin Plan prompted Dairy Australia’s investment in economic analysis regarding the impact of water buybacks.

Focus area: Investment decisions

IROP Recommendation	IROP Priority	Dairy Australia response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebalance the investment portfolio to maintain mix of short-term, region-specific projects alongside long-term strategic research, whilst addressing stakeholder perceptions regarding visibility of short-term outcomes. 	Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver on the Strategic Plan 2030 by maintaining a balanced investment portfolio that unlocks today's potential while driving innovation for future success. Ensure a more deliberate balance between higher-risk, longer-term investments and reliable, iterative research that also delivers short-term, practical outcomes for farmers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider targeted communication strategies to better share updates on investment outcomes and their on-farm applicability. Continue refining economic evaluation frameworks and add market-failure checks for new research proposal. 	For consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current research communications activities, evaluate effectiveness of content and channels, and develop targeted communications to improve awareness of the outcomes and on-farm applicability. Update the Strategic Investment Framework and Investment Review Panel processes and documentation to ensure market-failure checks are embedded in the governance framework and approval assessments.

Focus area: Cross-industry and cross-sector collaboration

IROP Recommendation	IROP Priority	Dairy Australia response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand collaboration with other RDCs and industry bodies to address shared challenges, particularly climate adaptation, environmental sustainability and productivity improvements. 	Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work collaboratively with the Council of RDCs and directly with specific RDCs on further opportunities to address shared challenges.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve visibility of collaborative work and outcomes to levy payers and stakeholders. 	Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the visibility of collaborative work and its outcomes for farmers and other stakeholders, including flagship projects such as CalfWays – a joint initiative of Dairy Australia and Meat and Livestock Australia.

Focus area: Governance, compliance and government alignment

IROP Recommendation	IROP Priority	Dairy Australia response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase transparency of governance decisions and levy fund management through regular public reporting; ensuring independence in advisory committee appointments. 	Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current public reporting of both governance decisions and levy fund management, evaluate effectiveness and develop a plan to improve transparency and stakeholder confidence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify governance arrangements for the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework (ADSF), including defining boundaries of Dairy Australia's secretariat role, and improve communication of decision-making processes. Streamline internal processes and empower decision-making at appropriate levels to reduce inefficiencies. 	For consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Dairy Australia's current role as ADSF secretariat and clarify its governance boundaries. Provide greater organisational clarity and direction within Dairy Australia by developing, communicating and embedding an operational and governance framework.



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